

The Hague – Things to do and places to see in the international city by the sea

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The beach – I travelled to The Hague during a weekend in August where temperatures rose to a toasty 30 degrees. The place to be and to be seen in The Netherlands when the weather gets that warm is most definitely the beach resort Scheveningen. Only 4 kilometres from the city centre, this resort boasts a number of affordable restaurants and seemingly endless bars and clubs that are open until late. In the sweltering daytime heat, the North Sea meets the soft sand to create the ideal getaway for many Dutch people searching for a break close to home. There is a pier, whose windows reflect the sea in a dazzling display. This pier contains a number of typical seaside shops plus a very large casino at its end. Be sure to stroll along it at sunset on a clear day, it makes for a very romantic atmosphere! The one thing to be aware of is that this is the most popular beach resort in The Netherlands, so for people looking for a quiet beach surrounded by nature, I'd advise you to look elsewhere!

Peace Palace – Though entrance to the building itself can only be organised via the Peace Palace website, and the gardens can never be accessed by the public, the free 30 minute audio tour which you receive when walking into reception is well worth having. The tour gives you a lot of information about the ideals that the Palace were built on, the academic scholars, such as Scotland's own Andrew Carnegie, who helped to shape these and how the Peace Palace fared during the two World Wars, with WWI sadly breaking out just one month after the Palace was finished. It is a beautiful building and the gardens which encircle it are lovely, so be sure to bring your camera for touristy snaps outside the main entrance gates!

Dutch Parliament – The Dutch parliament, or Het Binnenhof, is actually a number of buildings that extend behind an impressive brick entrance. The building is next to a small pond called Hofvijver, translated as Court Pond, and flags of all eleven different Dutch regions fly proudly on the bridge which allow pedestrians, bikes and cars to cross it. Take a walk around this set of buildings, and you can state that you've been at the very heart of Dutch political decision-making! When wondering around Het Binnenhof you get to a lovely square with the statue of The Netherlands' first prince; here is an ideal stop-point for lunch - be it in one of the restaurants there, or on a bench for the cheaper option.

The Royal Palace gardens: These gardens are, enchantingly, open from sunrise until sunset. This gave us apt time to buy our dinner of supermarket salads, messy profiteroles and then to find the gardens well before it was dark. Of course, having a meal in the palace gardens is only advisable during the summer months, preferably on a sunny day! We found a nice spot in the shade of a grand oak tree which overlooked the palace in all of its glory. Even if it's for a quick stroll around, the park offers a calm, serene respite from the hustle and bustle of what is otherwise a city that hardly stops for breath – well worth a visit!

Top tips for getting around The Hague:

Use a smart phone GPS system when exploring The Hague: even when you want to get lost in the city, it gives you a chance to regain your bearings afterwards!

Hire a bike: it doesn't cost too much, and some Dutch cycle lanes are bigger than UK roads! For a widespread city like The Hague, having a bike makes a lot of places much more accessible, especially if you want to get to Scheveningen from the city centre; we walked there in 30 degree heat, don't do it to yourself!